

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to your assigned grant specialist to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: (e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)	September 30 th , 2014 to September 30 th 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	Heather Benham
Authorized Representative Phone:	(706) 613-0122
Authorized Representative Email:	Heather@athenslandtrust.org
Recipient Organization Name:	Athens Land Trust
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Athens, Ga Local Food Connection Program
Grant Agreement Number: (e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)	14-LFPPX-GA-0042
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Athens, Ga
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,754

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

✓ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

☐ Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

Goal 1: Expand on the infrastructure of the WBFM by developing new markets to enhance and grow a local food economy.

i. *Objective 1:1: Establish a local small grower/producer network (herein called “GPN”).*

a. Progress Made:

A total of 15 growers/producers participated in Local Food Connection during the grant period. Through working with our initial group of farmers on this project, we have identified critical needs for successful small farm startup and viability, and ways to leverage collective efforts in combination with our resources to effectively provide for those needs.

The collective met 18 times to tour each others’ farms, collaborate on crop planning, troubleshoot difficulties, and share best practices, expertise, successes and challenges. members supported each other in business and product development, including marketing, packaging and pricing, and value added producers in the network were able to source product from their partner farmers.

b. Impact on Community:

Participating producers reported increased confidence and understanding of market access and implementation strategies as a result of their participation in GPN. Two GPN growers have implemented independent CSA and subscription basket programs as a result of practices and procedures learned. We have helped our farmers reach a stage where they feel prepared to mentor new farmers in the position they were in at the start of this project. We have established markets that entry level farmers can immediately plug into, addressing a major start up barrier faced by the average small producer.

ii. *Objective 1:2: Develop an institutional CSA program linking the growers/producers to wholesale and institutional markets.*

a. Progress Made:

Eight growers/producers participated in two 13 week multi-farm CSA sessions, serving 23 customers, including St. Mary’s Hospital staff. The CSA will continue in 2017, with an emphasis

on increasing production and recruiting additional farmers in order to meet the volumes demanded by institutional markets.

b. Impact on Community:

GPN producers have identified guaranteed outlets for their produce which require minimal time away from their farms as critical to their success. While the volumes of product our growers can supply make consistent access to institutional markets a work in progress, five local restaurants and two small, independent grocery stores were willing and able to purchase any product left over from our satellite market stands. As a result, farmers were able to connect with individual consumers while still developing relationships with buyers interested in larger scale purchasing.

iii. Objective 1:3: Garner support of the local food system by characterizing the small grower/producer community in ACC and the institutions that support them through participation in the CSA.

a. Progress Made:

In marketing both the St. Mary's Produce Stand and the multi-farm CSA, we have drawn attention to the collaborative nature of our work with new and beginning farmers, and the benefits of supporting sustainable agriculture. We communicate this regularly through our social media outlets, print media, posters, flyers, e-newsletters and print newsletters, as well as via our website.

b. Impact on Community:

As awareness is generated around the benefits of locally-produced food, demand increases, creating opportunity for improved sales and market attendance, to the benefit of our GPN and the community at large. Network growers and producers were connected to new markets and sales opportunities, while restaurants, grocery stores and retail stand/CSA customers have access to food from producers and farms that they can get to know and interact with directly. This facilitates greater awareness and appreciation of food producers and the work that goes into their products, and enables purchasers to support their local economy.

iv. Objective 1:4: Work toward the development of a shared community kitchen.

a. Progress Made:

In partnership with Clarke County School District, the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government and the Athens Housing Authority, ALT is working with Purpose Built Communities to develop a feasibility plan for the West Broad neighborhood, evaluating existing assets in order to determine best uses through community input. Exploring avenues to develop a shared use kitchen for the community is part of this long term process. In the meantime, students in our Young Urban Farmers program have utilized an existing kitchen space managed by Athens Clarke County School District for culinary training, and a Food Project benefitting GPN producers. Students utilized produce purchased from GPN network farmers to develop a variety

of value added products, including beet green kimchi, mixed green kimchi, scallion kimchi, pickled radish seed pods, pickled green tomatoes and pickled green strawberries for sale to local restaurants.

b. Impact on Community:

The educational experience for ALT's Young Urban Farmers is invaluable. They are afforded the opportunity to learn food preservation techniques, food science, nutrition and entrepreneurship through practical application. Restaurants benefit from a marketing standpoint, as they can advertise locally sourced and prepared menu items that contribute to development of neighborhood youth. Expansion of this initiative to include community members as well as students will create a market for produce that is typically hard to sell, reduce food waste, create additional economic opportunity for community members, and keep local dollars in circulation. The larger community benefits from the continued development of a sustainable local food system.

Goal 2: Increase consumption of and access to locally grown and produced agricultural products by low-income and low-access residents.

v. *Objective 2:1: Develop incentives to encourage low-income, low-access shoppers to shop at WBFM and other outreach sites.*

a. Progress Made:

Through our partnership with Wholesome Wave Georgia, we were able to offer the Double Dollars program at West Broad Farmers Market and the St. Mary's produce stand, generating over \$7,000 in SNAP sales for our producers over two market seasons. WIC vouchers were offered to shoppers at three county clinics, in conjunction with nutrition education workshops for recipients. Neighborhood discount and frequent shopper cards were widely distributed for the West Broad Farmers Market, which saw an 85% increase in sales between the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

b. Impact on Community:

The 2015 and 2016 seasons of the WBFM saw an increase in vendors, shoppers, SNAP sales and overall sales. This increased economic activity in a low-income community served to strengthen the local economy. Additionally, the WIC and St. Mary's produce stands resulted in increased sales for 16 local growers and producers, and served to increase healthy food access for hospital staff, visitors, WIC participants and the surrounding communities. As a result, we will expand this model to additional community sites and WIC clinics in 2017.

vi. *Objective 2:2: Expand local food access by establishing satellite/mobile produce stands.*

a. Progress Made:

The produce stand at St. Mary's hospital had a successful inaugural season, with 1,208 customers spending \$5,134 dollars over 7 months of operation, and 13 producers contributing product. Hospital partners would like to help expand on the piloted model, bringing additional

produce stands to sites around the city. Five growers were trained by Ga Dept. of Public Health to accept WIC produce vouchers, and produce stands at Clarke, Walton and Jackson County clinics were established as a result, with several more in development at this time.

b. Impact on Community:

By adding additional markets, we are increasing market opportunities for growers within our network, and creating opportunities for new growers and producers to join. We are also increasing access to fresh, healthy food within our community, specifically in limited access areas. Through our partnership with Wholesome Wave Georgia, we are able to provide half price produce to SNAP customers without decreasing income received by our producers.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 1
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 1
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 1
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 2
- v. Number of new markets established: 3
- vi. Market sales increased by \$109,127 and increased by 171%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 44

a. Percent Increase: 100% increase from baseline date

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

We were able to develop relationships with new businesses through outreach, interviews, surveys and ongoing dialogue. We connected with farmers identified through local events, friends and Cooperative Extension. Launching a produce stand at St. Mary's Hospital allowed us to introduce local produce to a diverse group of hospital visitors, staff and community members. Additionally, ALT engaged new businesses in local produce sales by selling leftover produce from the St. Mary's produce stand to 2 new grocers and 4 new restaurants. The WIC markets and West Broad Farmers Market enabled producers to expand their reach to low access/low income populations that ALT reaches. We hosted 6 outreach events at clinics, hospitals, community centers and schools, directly reaching about 250 people and distributing 108 Neighborhood Discount Cards. Through these targeted outreach activities, we engaged low income, low access populations in conversations about the Double Dollars (now "Fresh For Less") program at the WBFM and St. Mary's produce stand, WIC produce stands, local food systems and community wellness.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. *Who are your community partners?*

St. Mary's Healthcare System, the Clarke County School District, NRCS, UGA Extension, ACC Housing Authority, Daily Groceries Cooperative, Home.Made Catering, The National Restaurant, The University of Georgia, Wholesome Wave Georgia and the Clarke, Jackson and Walton County WIC clinics.

ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?

- St. Mary's Healthcare System has been instrumental in providing the space and support necessary to continue a produce stand in their hospital. They financially support our incentive program, and provide nutritional information and cooking demos at the produce stands.
- The Clarke County School District allows ALT to use its property for the West Broad Market Garden and West Broad Farmers Market, and allows ALT use of one of its commercial kitchens. These sites provide training for the Young Urban Farmers Program, vending space for GPN producers, and licensed production space for value added producers, respectively.
- ALT works with NRCS and UGA Extension to provide technical support, training and on-the-farm workshops to local growers and producers.
- The ACC Housing Authority helps distribute promotional materials and provides a space for ALT to facilitate cooking demos and nutrition education.
- Daily Groceries Cooperative, Home.Made Catering, and The National Restaurant all purchase excess produce from our growers and consult on produce demand.
- UGA interns assist with outreach, marketing, farmers' market activities, cooking demos, nutrition education and health screenings.
- Wholesome Wave Georgia administers the statewide "Double Dollars" (now "Fresh For Less") program that enables us to provide SNAP customers with produce at half price.
- ALT works in partnership with the three WIC clinics to operate produce stands at the clinics in conjunction with their nutrition education workshops. WIC provides \$30 vouchers to each WIC family for use at the produce stands.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

- St. Mary's Healthcare System will continue to provide space and support for a weekly produce stand during the 2017 growing season, and have identified additional community partners- including outpatient wellness clinics in their system- interested in hosting additional satellite stands. They have expressed interest in supporting the expansion of this initiative by subsidizing

produce for low income shoppers, as well as providing continued intern and research support for nutrition education and evaluation connected to the stands.

-Clarke County School District will continue to be a strong partner for recruitment and support of the Young Urban Farmers program, which we intend to connect more meaningfully to the GPN. Students receive both class credit in agricultural science and Supervised Agricultural Experience project credit for participation in the program, which can serve as work-study for juniors and seniors who apprentice with GPN farmers in the future.

-ALT and the GPN will continue to collaborate with UGA, NRCS, UGA Extension services, Wholesome Wave Georgia, local groceries/restaurants, and WIC clinic in the ways listed above.

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? n/a

6. Have you publicized any results yet? yes

i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

Yes, we've issued press releases, news articles, and flyers and have added information on our website promoting the GPN.

ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

Local news outlets and our organization's membership base/social media followers.

iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

More than 2,700 stakeholders

*Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? Yes

i. If so, how did you collect the information?

In depth one on one and group interviews (growers); surveys (growers, restaurant buyers, farmers market and satellite market customers)

ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

GPN Farmers- Participating in the farmer network has been instrumental to farmers developing the skill set to expand their markets. Our most successful farmers are eager to support and mentor up and coming small growers. Labor, shared equipment and cost effective farm supply

purchasing are the most pressing needs to be addressed in order for them to successfully participate in the markets we develop. Farmers want to focus on securing guaranteed, streamlined markets that are cost effective and time efficient, and effectively scaling production to consistently meet such markets. Those who participated in our multi-farm CSA reported a preference for more frequent payouts in order to improve cash flow. One network member said, "The Farmer Network is a great resource for new farmers like us. It has offered guidance and support so that we can access new markets for our products. We now have a place where other farmers can effectively work together to promote local agriculture."

St. Mary's Hospital- The market stand was well received and effective for those it reached, and they would like to work with us to expand the model to other locations, as well as subsidize some of the produce, so that farmers can profit while enhancing the price incentive to low income customers. They have begun talks with Athens Clarke County Library, several of their outpatient wellness centers, and other sites interested in hosting market stands. Customers were especially excited about the opportunity to purchase items like honey and bread in addition to produce, and look forward to expanded offerings in the coming season.

Restaurant buyers- Restaurant buyers expressed enthusiasm for increased local produce options, identifying consistent volumes and efficient, reliable ordering as top priorities.

Consumers- 68% of shoppers at the St. Mary's produce stand said that the produce stand increased their access to fresh produce. Respondents requested extended hours, expansion to other sites and more days per week.

8. Budget Summary:

i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: ✓

ii. *Did the project generate any income?* No

a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? n/a

9. Lessons Learned:

i. **Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).**

Positive experiences

Farmers became a reliable support system for each other, sharing information, best practices and resources. We learned that some farmers will "graduate" from the "entry level" of needing help to access markets and develop multiple income streams. Some of our farmers used what they learned with us to implement their own CSA's or subscription baskets, and connect with restaurant buyers local to their farms. This enables us to recruit more beginning farmers to

develop and connect with more established mentors. At the same time, we will continue to work with our most successful farmers as they identify new needs and challenges related to their expanding businesses, including labor, bulk purchasing, and shared equipment and facilities, such as cold storage, tractors and tools.

Challenges/limitations-

-The volume and price point of produce that is practical for institutional buyers is beyond the scope of what our small producers can provide at this stage, even in aggregate. We need to explore other avenues of marketing our multi farm CSA and reaching the clientele we want to serve while still benefiting our farmers. To that end, we are exploring innovations such as SNAP subsidized CSA shares, i.e. The Food Project's (Boston, Ma) "Farm to Family" model.

-Because beginning farmers often have to work in order to maintain steady income in the first 5+ years of operation, it is critical that they streamline operations from production to market as much as possible. It was often very challenging for our farmers to participate in retail stands for this reason. Although farmers enjoyed the opportunity to meet customers and answer questions about their products and growing practices, time constraints made collective effort critical to maintaining the viability of produce stands. Streamlined ordering systems and ongoing technical assistance to increase yields will enable our growers to broaden access to restaurant and institutional customers.

-Drought and excessive heat made what is perceived as peak season by the consumer (midsummer) a slowed production time for our growers, leading to disappointment when people were looking for cucumbers, tomatoes, and other summer produce we didn't have due to weather. Farmers need strategies and infrastructure to grow successfully in extreme heat, and consumers need education about the effects of very high temperatures on fruiting crops.

ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:

For the 2016 market season, we significantly scaled back planned promotional and outreach activities aimed at increasing traffic to West Broad Farmers Market through the incentive programs established by this project, planned four month extension of the St. Mary's produce stand, and projected expansion to two additional WIC clinics. Due to prolonged heatwaves from late spring to early fall, our produce availability did not always meet customer expectations, leading to frustration and disappointment which we did not want to see jeopardize the brands our producers worked hard to build. We focused instead on fulfilling our CSA orders, and supplementing farmer income through the development of market outlets for nontraditional farm products, in partnership with our YUF students and restaurant customers. We developed strategies to informally educate consumers on how heat impacts fruiting crops, and brainstormed approaches to developing an informational campaign to positively address this and other possible nature induced challenges small farmers face.

iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

10. Future Work:

i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

-Expand and deepen Grower/Producer Network- As our most successful growers continue to scale and grow their businesses, we will continue outreach to additional small producers who can benefit from our resources, plugging them into a network of mentor colleagues. We will continue to support producers as they grow by developing innovative strategies to help them access labor, equipment, farm inputs and marketing affordably.

-As our farmers grow and expand to new markets, the need to increase production intensifies their labor demands. To this end, we will work to connect our Young Urban Farmers program to our network farms. We are developing a second tier of the program that will allow returning youth who have gained experience and training on our farms to work with network farmers in specialized and challenging roles. We will also create a pathway for program alumni who have graduated high school to participate in intensive apprenticeships with our farmers, while earning Athens Technical College credits, transferable to University of Georgia degree programs.

-We are continuing our work with the St. Mary's Hospital system to provide consistent retail outlets that meet the dual purpose of supporting small farmers, while providing low income communities access to affordable produce. We will be expanding our satellite market pilot to other accessible, high traffic public spaces in Athens and adjacent counties.

ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?

We are continuing research on the pressure points between desirability of retail pricing and consistency of wholesale markets, and analyzing costs and benefits of scaling from one to the other for small producers. We have observed increasing demand for hyper-local product in the institutional market, which smaller producers are not poised to take advantage of alone. A cohort of graduate fellows from the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business Institute of Leadership Advancement is in the process of researching approaches to scalability that our farmers can apply as a collective in order to capitalize on wholesale opportunities.

